Right Hon Lord Templemore.
with great respect from
the Author.

IRELAND

CONTRASTED WITH SCOTLAND;

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

8.02

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE BELFAST HISTORIC SOCIETY.

By JOHN FISHER MURRAY, A.B.

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Belfast Historic Society.

ROBERT GRIMSHAW, ESQ.,

IN THE CHAIR.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY.—"That the thanks of this Society are due, and are hereby given, to JOHN FISHER MURRAY, Esq., for the Address, which he has just now delivered, and that he be requested to permit it to be printed at the expense of this Institution.

IRELAND

CONTRASTED WITH SCOTLAND.

THE many and varied causes which, acting on different countries, produce, in some, superiority in moral, intellectual, and physical condition, while others remain wild, rude, and uncultivated; the *rationale* of national progression and decay; the circumstances which, operating from age to age, and from generation to generation, contribute to form and fix the peculiar character of every people; the results of the policy of states towards each other, and the motives which give rise to international relations, might, waiving any particular application, afford apt and ample matter for our discussion. I would rather limit, in some degree, the application of these general questions, in order to interest and excite national feeling. We may not yet awhile "girdle the world with our sympathies;" our charities are best engaged, as most required, at home. In other lands, where the solid blessings have promptly waited on the glorious name of liberty, let the outgushings of freeborn hearts, reach factious Greece or fallen Poland; but while we are children in the ways of freedom—while the pervious and smoky cabin is yet to be replaced by the rose-encircled cottage—while the watery weed and acid refuse have yet to be superseded by food worthy of human beings—while we have yet to see the squalid rags of our people removed by decent raiment, idleness by industrious emulation, ignorance by the diffusion of useful knowledge; while all these are wanting, and the reciprocal ties of affection and goodwill, which should ever subsist between the owner and the tiller of the soil, let us confine the sphere of our philanthropy—let us concentrate all our energies towards our own improvement, and when we reach the shore, when we are safe from the storm and the wave, we may look abroad through the world upon struggling humanity, give a helping hand when we are able, to

some our pity, our sympathy to all. Be the task mine, however humiliating, to sum up the causes of our country's degradation, to contrast and compare her history with that of another nation, in whose condition there exists a shade of parallelism, to find what portion of our existing evils is attributable to the operation of British policy, what to ourselves; and reflecting on the bounties which God, with wide extended hand, has showered upon us, the capabilities with which our soil and our people are endowed, endeavour to drag forth the secret of this anomalous perversion of good gifts, and reasoning from what we ought to be, determine the causes which have made us what we are.

What, then, is our present situation? Possessing neither national manufactures, wealth nor literature, enjoying not the fostering care of a resident proprietary, and torn by political dissensions, the more bitter that they are religious also, the land presents a wretched and ruined picture of desolation; the fertile soil pours forth its treasures for those who never tread it; the island is but a drain through which every resource is transmitted far beyond the hope or prospect of enriching the source of its production; while from the vitals of poor Ireland, the wealth of thousands is spun, she remains of the bloodless anatomy, the attenuated spectre; the food which her sons should eat, fills other lands with fatness, and furnishing the superfluities and luxuries of life to the few, retains not for the many the mere essentials of existence.

The stranger who enters our metropolis, repairing to some splendid hotel, and bearing with him the passport of admission to the *élite* of society, sees and hears nothing of all this. The gay barouche, the gorgeous coach, the graceful cabriolet, roll by his window, while crowds of well dressed pedestrians pouring along, compel him to ask, in wondering astonishment, "where is all this misery?" Let him mount his horse, and observe the swarms of half naked boys who crowd around him when he alights, eagerly combating for the chance of a miserable penny, or, if he pleases, the certainty of nothing; let him look on the crowds of importunate mendicants that assail him at every step, the groups of bareheaded and barelegged wretches wrapped up in tattered cloaks, the only stop between them and absolute nudity; let him ride, if he dare look on the climax of

human misery, through the Liberty of Dublin, where tottering palaces, tenanted only by the rat or thief, embrace each other across the streets, where the rank grass sprouts up between the stones, unpressed by the busy foot of man, and meagre wretches push their heads from sashless windows, in curious gaze, on the well-dressed stranger, and astonishment at his business in such a place. If he be yet incredulous, if he still find the distress of the country existing only in the over-charged statement of agitators and demagogues, let him go a little farther; let him seek the South and West and Northwest, not with a bundle of tracts in his pocket, not with a population, emigration, or any other theory, in his head, not seeking information through any party, anxious only to find a steady answer to his own query, "Where is all this misery?"

He will observe here and there, amid a thousand smoky cabins, which scarce lift themselves above the turf that forms them, an enormous mansion dropping to decay, where some lordly proprietor does *not* reside; two or three decent residences in a parish mark the abodes of middle men and grazing farmers, who, possessing no property of their own, and living by trading in land, monopolize large tracts, forming miserable substitutes for resident gentry. Passing through a great extent of pasture country, in the hands of a few holders, he is astonished to hear that the beeves and sheep which cover these rich green fields are transported to England, while the price obtained for them follows the same route, so that the meat embarks as it were in the morning, and the money at night. He will find the able-bodied peasantry, when not worse engaged, sleeping in the fields, for lack of employment, or lounging in their great coats against walls and ditches, careless, because uncared for. He may observe idleness, which drives many of the natural protectors (!) of this poor people to the hells of St. James's, employing nearly the same instruments to debase and destroy them. The tennis, it is true, is degraded to hand-ball; single stick supplants the gentlemanly foil; hazard is represented by chuck-farthing; an iron bullet, rolled backwards and forwards on a turnpike road, supplies the billiard-table; while whiskey, more effectual than burgundy or champagne, gives fire to the competitors, redoubling the frequency as well as the force of their execrations.

Visit Scotland. How glorious to that nation the contrast—how disgraceful to this! Pass from one extremity to the other, you find comfort and peace; enter the cottage of the labouring man, for the most part built by the landlord or manufacturer with whom he lives or works; it is airy, neat, and spacious; observe the family at their noon-day meal, plentiful and clean; converse with the occupant, you will not fail to observe him shrewd, well-informed, and sensible, free from that drollery, rapidity, and epithetic mode of conversation, which distinguish our peasantry. This difference in the national character serves to mark, in a degree, their respective conditions. These have the comforts to supply which use has made necessary; and, fearing to be deprived of them, or anxious for their increase, are habitually reserved and thoughtful: those, on the contrary, having all their lives only the necessaries of existence, neither fearing worse, nor hoping better prospects, are gay, capricious, though ever discontented. Throughout Scotland, manufactures, whether useful or luxurious, are abundantly produced, giving a rich return to the labour of hundreds of thousands, filling foreign lands with produce, the profits of which, returning again to her shores, increase her resources, and add new life and vigour to her efforts. The busy hum of labour is heard throughout the land, industry begets industry, capital swells capital; nor is the emulation of commercial enterprise any where so excited as among this well directed and happy people.* Agriculture is with them merely one of the branches of commercial speculation, and, from the nature of the country, by no means an extensive one. The land is scientifically cultivated by a few men of capital, who hold large tracts. You do not there, as here, see scraps of ground put up to the highest bidder, among miserable insolvents, who to live must have land, and in a place where there is nothing else to live by, if they have it not may starve. Independent of their great ma-

* One little town alone, Kilmarnock, in Ayrshire, with a population of 18,000, sends forth annually from its warehouses, manufactures to the value of £142,000, giving constant employment in the production of these to many hundreds of industrious, and, as their appearance bespeaks, happy artisans. Why should not Ireland be a manufacturing as well as an agricultural country?

nufactures, the working of mines, quarries, building and repairing public works, with many other operations of mere manual labour, afford employment as well to their own as to many of our countrymen.

Although one of the many evils of this country, viz. Absenteeism, prevails to a considerable extent in Scotland, yet it does so without materially affecting her prosperous advancement. The enormous preponderance of those classes termed the respectable, the wealthy manufacturer, gentleman farmer, retired merchant, and the number of small landed proprietors, more than counterbalance any evil resulting from the absence of the aristocracy, from a country too rich to need, too independent to care for them. Is not this glorious? Is it not sublime to behold the well directed energies of man warring successfully, amid barren rocks, with nature's thriftiness, filling a niggard and unfruitful land with plenty, and in a wilderness establishing a storehouse of the arts—an emporium of literature? The "cause remote" of this proud pre-eminence, these enviable attributes, the secret of the prosperity which Scots enjoy, may be deduced from one source, found to spring from one root, named in one emphatic and expressive word—independence. On their own responsibility they have ever stood; and how lofty is the station they have reached by wise laws, and institutions directed only by common sense, and a complete devotion to their own interests! England cannot claim the least glory in the present prosperity of Scotland. Up to the period of the Union, every art by which the internal economy of that nation was regulated, with a very few exceptions, was the result of free agency and deliberation unfettered, uninterfered with—the deliberation, too, of those best qualified to legislate for, as most interested in, the welfare of their country. When England interfered at any time, not to protect the interests or improve the condition, but to menace the national independence, or crush the religious freedom of her weaker sister, watchful, resistful, indignant, the Scots thwarted alike secret intrigue and avowed hostility. Too many ensanguined plains bear testimony to their love for freedom, to leave a doubt of their capacity to enjoy the blessings which follow in her train. From her early struggles, we may easily trace the sturdy independence which at this day forms one of the national characteristics—the magnetism which, in every quarter of the globe, draws Scotchmen

together in union and mutual support—the national selfishness (if selfishness that can be called, which will brook no subserviency of their interests to those of others.) From these struggles of old we may read the uses of liberty, and distinguish in the blood and fury, and strife of those times past, the parents of the peace, concord, and prosperity, that delight us in the present. Scotland, in a word, is and has been free and unfettered, enjoying for a long period the presence of her native princes. Hence all her blessings; for, wanting liberty, she would never have enjoyed them, or, like Ireland, would have exhausted her treasures only for the enjoyment of others.

How very different, indeed, has been the case with regard to Ireland! There is no reason to suppose, had her circumstances been similar, in any degree, to those of Scotland, that at this day she would not have enjoyed a pre-eminence yet more proud; nor, on the contrary, had it been the fate of the other to have groaned under the tyranny, oppression, and wrong-headed legislation, which for six hundred years crushed Ireland, that at this day she would not be more debased than we are. Away with those who, looking on the distracted state of the country, argue an inherent deterioration of moral principle, an incapacity for an unlimited time to acquire respect for property or life, to adopt habits of sobriety and industry! Let us hear no more of this calumny against the people; a people that for six centuries had but a nominal existence, denied the sacred right of worshipping the Great Creator as they pleased—the minister of their religion hunted down with the same fury as a wolf, for the price was the same—the very cut of hair and beard prescribed to them, and all the horrors of a flagitious penal code imposed upon their necks—a people till very lately worse than slaves; and when they obtained the glorious appellation of freemen, in point of ameliorated condition, or increased comforts, as much slaves as before. So long as the causes which call forth the frenzied manifestations of popular dissatisfaction have existence, so long, in one shape or other, will outrage find an easy prey; and whether the steel or the cord, or exile, or all these be tried, the success will be, as hitherto, like his, who treading out a fire extinguishes only the spot beneath his feet, while all around springs forth in a blaze, more destructive than before.

The great and important differences between our own country and the one with which she has just been contrasted, are, that the one was conquered, the other was not—the one legislated for herself, the other was governed by the partial and unjust laws of a more powerful nation—the interests of the former were only those of an Anglo-Irish party, those of the latter, of the nation at large; while in the one country wealth was fairly distributed, and all had the means of enjoying life, as well as of living, in the latter, the two great classes which Sancho Panza distinguishes in the world, "the have every things and the have nothings," were marked as distinctively as the caste of a Hindoo; the former, and less numerous, comprising English, Cromwelian, and Dutch adventurers—the latter consisting of the great bulk of an oppressed and long suffering people. The cause which had first drawn British power to our shores was wisely enough considered the best bond of its extension and perpetuity; to the fostering of every species of dissension, therefore, whether religious or political, the "undertakers" of Irish affairs applied themselves with no less vigour than success. The efforts to raise up an adventitious power for the security of Anglo-Irish interests, and the oppression of the natives, were manifested in the rise and progress of Orange ascendancy, to which it has become but a truism to attribute the greater part of Ireland's degradation and misery.

To make the nature of this ascendancy intelligible to a Scotchman, the history of whose country affords no parallel in this respect, let him imagine a class of men, bearing to the whole population of the island the ratio of one to seven, for the most part bound by secret oaths, in secret societies, protected by an armed partizan force, exclusively selected from the dregs of their own party, ever ready and willing to spill blood on the most trivial pretexts; let him, further, imagine such a party, hostile in the utmost, to the improvement of the people, filling exclusively every office of trust and power in the church, the law, the magistracy, and the government—each successive Viceroy seeing with the eyes, hearing with the ears, thinking with the heads, acting with the hands of this party, he will no longer wonder that mid-day outrage and nightly murder stalked through the land—that the mass of the people, beholding a few, screened by partial laws, insulting and outraging the unprotected class of

their fellow-subjects, should have risen in indignant and unavailing rebellion, furnishing victims for the bayonet, scaffold, and hulk, till the extermination so fondly wished for was at one period well nigh consummated. These days are gone for ever. Alas! for ascendancy fallen—alas! for lost monopoly! Adieu, exclusive years, when to be an Orangeman, or the advocate of Orange principles, was the only passport to office or reward—when, to preach with the requisite degree of asperity against fellow-countrymen and fellow-christians, opened an easy path to ecclesiastical preferments and dignities.

The glories of old are departed. The Government of the country cannot see the utility, though a Minister of the Gospel can,* of the ragged processions, to sound of fife and drum, commemorative of each triumphal anniversary, in whose train stalk murder and rancour and strife, as often as their ill-omened banners are insultingly floated over the heads of those who despised, but dared not oppose them. The necessity is no longer apparent for continuing a force, whose inefficiency, as soldiers, is supplied by their fury, as partizans, and who, on recent occasions, have proved their total unfitness for a country such as ours.

It is to be regretted, that the feeble arm of the ascendancy faction has of late, in some measure, been endowed with new vigour, by the conciliatory disposition of the Government of the country towards the very class of men by whom it had been goaded beyond the utmost limits of forbearance. This, we must believe, was an experimental attempt to ascertain whether these men would co-operate with any government anxious, in any way, to do justice to Ireland. But no!—accepting power only to turn it against the giver, they manifested on this occasion, as on every other, the implacable hostility to equal legislation which has uniformly distinguished them. They will for ever oppose the views of any minister who governs not through them, and them alone, and who either will not, or dare not, bow the necks of the people beneath the faded and tattered banners of *ci-devant* ascendancy.

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* See Report of a speech, in favour of Orange processions, said to have been delivered, in June last, in the back parlour of some tract shop, in Dublin, by the Rev. Charles Boyton.

Let us hope, then, that the regeneration of Ireland will no longer be retarded by efforts, hopeless as they must ever be, to induce the co-operation of this party in the good work. Let him who wishes to live in the hearts of the Irish people, as their benefactor and friend, look to the results of its tyranny—to the denunciations of every measure of wise and liberal policy—to the assumption of exclusive loyalty, and the most unmeasured abuse of all that loyalty teaches us to respect, in the same breath. Let him observe the avidity with which, on every occasion, the oppression of the people is sought for; let him look to these, and all the other consequences of the usurpation of a faction over the executive, and determine his choice. The friend to Ireland must be the foe to party; if he cling to the one, he must at once and for ever cast off the other.

The blow which, in a great degree, destroyed the open and avowed ascendancy of the Orange party was the more afflicting in this, that it was in some measure suicidal. This, to them, irreparable calamity was the restoration of civil and religious liberty to the Catholics of Ireland, by the very men, too, whose pride exulted in the consistency of a long and vigorous opposition to the measure which the voice of a united people compelled them reluctantly to concede.

It was not, however, to have been expected that the effects of long and pernicious habit could be easily counteracted, that the severe and crooked policy of by-gone times could all at once give place to a wise and impartial legislation. Thus, in the measure of peace and conciliation, we found some leaven of the bitterness of old; the draught so nauseous to expiring ascendancy was rendered less intolerable, by an adjunct of the most agreeable kind,* and justice at length came among us—her first steps, as if to show how long she had remained in fetters, lame, tottering, and ungraceful.

It was anticipated, as a necessary consequence, by many of the best friends to the measure of amelioration, that the removal of civil disabilities would cause the total cessation of party feeling, and the outrages connected with it. The rapid introduction of capital into the country, and consequent employment of the poor, were fondly

* Disfranchisement of the Forty Shilling Freeholders.

hoped for; in short, Ireland was thenceforward to be regenerated, as if by magic. In the name of freedom the oppressed were to be relieved, the hungry fed, the ignorant instructed, and the whole island was forthwith to assume the appearance of another Atalantis.

These delightful anticipations, based not on reason or fitness, but on the inherent disposition of man, to enhance the value of his own works, were never indulged in by those who, having studied well the causes, best knew the cure of the complicated evils under which the country laboured. It was well known to them, as it is now evident to every one, that the healing measure did not come home to the fire-side of the poor man, producing any change in the social condition of himself or family; it is true, that the Catholic obtained a small and disproportionate voice in the legislature; an opportunity was afforded to the British Senate of knowing the state of Ireland, otherwise than through the party which for so long a time had existed by misrepresentations of its condition; it is true, that every lover of civil and religious liberty, exulted at the triumph of justice over party. Abstractedly speaking, however, the benefit derived from emancipation was a feather in the scale, an unsubstantial privilege, opposed to solid grievances and manifest oppression.

The legislature having thus found a panacea for all our evils, and assuming the boon as of great value, from the violence of the opposition offered to it, was inclined to rest perfectly satisfied with the good already effected, and its probable consequences. The people of Ireland, on the contrary, having at last obtained the name of freemen, were naturally enough anxious to enjoy their immunities, and exercise their privileges: thus agitation, which had forced open the portals of the temple of liberty, was again employed in seeking the penetralia, that the blessings which had hitherto only been partially, might now be universally distributed.

Dissatisfied with "beggarly liberty," the voice of an emancipated people arose indignantly against the most prominent of their grievances. Complaint was heard louder than ever, and the agitation which, anomalous as it may appear, retards while it advances us, changing its object only, abated nothing of its violence. The outcry now became loud and general against those men who, as was said, stirred up the country in unnatural ferments, and maintained it at the

boiling point, for the promotion of schemes of personal ambition or paltry profit. Now it was, that those who fondly fancied that when they had placed men on an equality, in civil and religious privileges, they had atoned for every thing, found how blindly they had erred. Agitation, which in Scotland cannot live, because there is no food for it, in this country thrives, and grows formidable, sustained by mis-government and its thousand abuses. It has its origin, not with the men who take a prominent part in its dissemination, but in the existing grievances of the country—and is upborne by its struggles against abuses, which, if removed, will cause it to sink in silence and repose, at once and for ever.

To show that the resident proprietors in this country, from the operation of unjust and foolish laws, so far from protecting, in many instances only add to the oppression of the people, it will be enough to glance at the Grand Jury system, and the mode in which nearly a million of money is annually applied under its operation. When it is considered that these local parliaments, (if parliament that can be called, which is nominated by an irresponsible individual,) are utterly independent of, and uncontrolled by, those over whose purses they exercise despotic sway, no one can be surprised that the application of the money so levied should be as improvident, as the method of raising it is unjust, and that "taxation without representation" should, in this instance, as in every other, be productive only of flagrant jobbing, corruption and oppression. If, for example, a road is unfortunately cut too near, or, on the other hand, at too great a distance from the demesne of a Grand Juror, straightway presentments are forwarded to provide against either of these mishaps, while some conscientious underling swears that such alteration is indispensable and requisite. Not content with imitating the munificent example of Swift's country gentleman, who

> "Out of his great bounty,
> Built a bridge, at the expense of the county;"

these high-minded functionaries extend the principle to the improvement of their estates, the aggrandizement of favourite underlings by perpetual jobbing, and the partial disposal of many lucrative offices, connected with county business. The opinion of a most

talented and patriotic man, author of the "Practical View of Ireland," which should be read by every one who wishes to learn in what patriotism really consists, may be collected from the following extract—"In every free country, the essential condition of taxation is, that those who contribute to the levy should, either by themselves or their representatives, determine its amount, and regulate its distribution, or, to use the words of the *lex justissima* of Edward the First, 'when all are taxed, the consent of all should be required.' We would naturally deem it important in any legislative measure, investing a power of taxation for local purposes, to consult these first principles of equity and justice: yet, in defiance of them, the Grand Juries of Ireland, nominated by the Sheriffs, levy £800,000 annually from the defenceless peasantry. A certain portion of this sum is perverted to the worst purposes; and in its distribution is made the instrument for exacting exorbitant rents, for bribes in county elections, and for the improvement of the absentee estates!—So much for the Grand Jury system."

Let me allude to a few of the copious sources of agitation, which the operation of the tithe system affords to us; and let me observe, by the way, that the efforts often made, and as often frustrated, to impose episcopacy upon Scotland, gave abundant evidence of the blessings of independence, which saved that country from groaning under the pressure of the harassing and demoralizing system, which afflicts our own. The discussion of the question of right to tithes, is one on which I mean not to enter, because those most interested in it have expressed a universal, and by no means equivocal opinion on the abstract question. To them I leave it, with the caution which Plato gives us from Socrates, "not to enquire by whom the thing is advocated, but whether, in itself, it be just and reasonable." As an illustration, however, of the law universal in Ireland, whereby the public burdens fall only on the poorest classes, the mode in which this system operates, deserves a moment's consideration. In the first place, by increasing pasturage, it tends to the accumulation of pauperism and crime throughout the country. Secondly; the same effects are produced by preventing the cultivation of arable land to the utmost, as the clergy participate in the profit of such improvements, without effort or risk on their own part. Thirdly; the direct

taxes are increased by the enormous military and police force required to exact the collection of tithe, which otherwise would not be necessary. In addition to these, when we consider the peculiarly irritating and vexatious mode of collecting this impost—the extraordinary and anomalous spectacle of the ministers of religion brought into direct hostile collision with the people, and failing, even with military and legal auxiliaries, to obtain from their fellow-countrymen of a different persuasion the sums to which existing laws, by connivance, not by right, have entitled them; when we find that the tithe payers ground their opposition, not on the mode of levying the tax, nor on the amount levied, but on the reasonableness and justice of the case,—it will surely become imperative on our rulers, no less speedily than effectually, to put an end to the present system. Let us not deceive ourselves; if we expect that to lift the burthen from one shoulder, and place it on the other, will prevent an overloaded people from flinging it off altogether; if by the extinction of tithes be meant only, that the present mode of collection shall be extinguished, while the same sum which heretofore had been drawn directly from the tiller of the soil as tithe, will now be extorted indirectly as rent, the evil, under another shape, remains as before, and doubtless the resistance will continue as before. Without infringing upon the revenues of the existing clergy, which ought to be, and must be sacred, it is time that we should look around us, observing church establishments in other countries, as in Scotland, for instance, where not only the law prescribes, but the nation adopts them; contrasting the revenues of others with those of our own establishment, and suggesting to men in power, that in a country "steeped to the very lips in poverty," the amount levied from the people should bear some proportion to the labour to be performed, and that ecclesiastical principalities should be brought within the bounds of reason and moderation—or, at least, shared with the poor, which they have a natural and obvious tendency to create. There is no need to fear that the Protestant religion will suffer from the change, or that the church will be less pure, because her ministers are rewarded in due proportion to their labour.

Passing to another of the evils of our unfortunate country, I cannot avoid saying, that the statements on this subject have, on the one

hand, greatly underrated, and, on the other, very much exaggerated, the amount of the affliction which Absenteeism heaps upon us. That non-residence of the landed proprietor is an evil, in a greater or less degree, is now denied by none; but while some are disposed to attribute to it the greater part of our calamities, others imagine that the evil influence is very trivial. The truth, as usual, will be found betwixt those extremes—because the circumstances of the country, considered apart from the question, influence very much our conclusions, respecting the extent of its operations. I have already stated, that the absence of the great landed proprietor from Scotland does not materially affect the prosperity of his part of the country, because there is ample employment for the poor, independent of his residence or control. But when the resources which atone for the absence of the landlord do not exist, as in Ireland, the mischief is one of greater magnitude, because the presence of the landed proprietors counteracts, to a certain extent, the evils resulting from the want of demand for labour, and consequent growth of pauperism. Let the absentee, however, be saddled with an equitable share of the public burthens; let a moderate system of poor laws, founded on a labour rate, give him an interest in keeping his tenantry off the parish; and no matter in what part of the world he may choose to reside, self-interest will supply his place at home, preserving his wealth by preventing poverty among those who live under him.

So long as we have no tie to unite in common interest the landlord, and every one who lives on his ground, so long the presence of a land owner, at all times desirable, becomes doubly so—because every pair of hands he employs, however few they may be, take so much from the general distress. We have no ground for supposing, however, that the influx of the absentees, Irish, English, nay, even of the bodies corporate, who have estates in Ireland, would afford ample employment to the idle, and worse than idle peasantry. It is not to be supposed, that the aristocracy of the country would become manufacturers, or employ the capital which they have not in turning to account the many resources with which the country abounds; nor can we hope for a very great diminution of national distress, in the mere improvement of their demesnes, or other limited sources of employment, which their residence would afford. As

well may we trust the relief of the starving poor to the capricious impulses of voluntary benevolence, as hope for the employment of the working poor, from the chance medley enterprise of the few proprietors that may be induced, or by arbitrary enactments compelled, to settle permanently among us. Let us reflect, that there is no method by which the absentees will more readily be induced to return to this country, than by enactments affecting the rent rolls. Those that now dare not look on the misery which they themselves, by every act of sordid oppression, have created, would gladly, when their incomes became curtailed, through a pauper charge, fly to their estates, and prevent, by personal superintendence and interested watchfulness, the total absorption of their revenues.

A great deal is said about the neatness and comfort observable on the estates of resident proprietors—and this, most gratuitously, is referred to the residence and paternal care of the landlord. It is not true, as a general law, that the condition of the people is improved where the proprietor is resident; but where it is the case, the cause will be found more in the amount of rent, and nature of the holding, than in the residence or non-residence, which by some is considered all-important. When the poor farmer or cotter talks of a "good landlord," the phrase has no reference to the place of his abode; his living here or there, whitewashing the cottages, or training up honeysuckle at the doors: it implies that he is indulgent and partial to the present holder, that his motto is, "live and let live," that his rents are easy, and that he abstains from putting up his land to auction, to obtain a higher nominal rent and an insolvent tenant. Let the friends of the people no longer mistake the means by which their objects may be obtained; let them unite in demanding, for the producer of wealth, a certain refuge from want, and a surety for employment, and, in a few years, we will look back, in wonder and astonishment, on the time when the salvation of the country was supposed to depend on the return of a few absentee proprietors.

It will require no force of imagination to conceive, that Scotland, at all times actually, and for a very long period virtually independent, was placed in circumstances admirably adapted for the rapid developement of her resources, at the period of her union with England. Thence may be dated the commencement of her prosperous career,

among the proximate or immediate causes of which, we may enumerate the universal education of the people, their union, the absence of politico-religious dissension, and the natural advantages of the country. To the early and general diffusion of education among the people, from a very remote period, the Scottish nation owes almost every thing; and the contrast between the two countries is the more striking from the fact, that the law which established the parochial schools in Scotland is tantamount to an enactment, compelling the incumbent of every parish in Ireland to have a school erected and maintained in that wherein he resides. No one denies that this sacred trust has been totally neglected. We were not allowed, however, the formation of our church establishment; otherwise we should have acted like our wise and sensible neighbours, who, when they built the church, erected the school, who settled the schoolmaster when they inducted the minister—who enjoined attendance as strictly to school as to kirk—who united the education of this world with that of the world to come, and provided so wisely and well for the free working and efficiency of their combined establishment, that, at this day, there is not a shepherd's hut upon their hills, where ignorance, either of God or man, can find a dwelling-place. To this is to be attributed the notorious and honourable fact, that, in every quarter of the world, natives of that country are found—not "hewers of wood, and drawers of water," not huddled together in the St. Giles's of every city, in dirt and beggary and ignorance, from generation to generation,—but learned, powerful, opulent, industrious, characterized by habits of perseverance and economy. Let prejudice sneer at the cold-heartedness and inhospitality of the Scot—yet it cannot be denied, that in all that tends to the elevation of the individual, or to the honour of his country, superior education gives him every advantage over us, in every walk of life: nor can national pride be with reason hurt at this candid avowal of the truth, for as we never existed as a nation, we cannot reproach ourselves with the results of left-handed legislation, while we may justly boast of the few virtues, which, like blossoms in a storm, still cling to the parent tree, smiling amid surrounding desolation.

Education, how widely soever diffused, would have profited Scotland little, had she not enjoyed freedom from the baneful operation

of party spirit and sectarian rancour. The industry which with us has ever been exercised, on the one hand, to oppress, and, on the other, to escape from oppression, with them was steadily directed to the certain advancement of science, manufactures, commerce; while we vainly supplicated for our freedom, they turned all her blessings to good account; the ships of her merchants crowd the seas, bearing the produce of varied labour to every clime, while at this day our empty harbours and deserted quays, give ample evidence of the want of commercial and manufacturing industry among us.

The union between England and Scotland, though strenuously opposed at the time, is now acknowledged by every one, to have contributed most essentially to the advancement of the latter. That similar effects were not produced by the incorporation of Ireland with Great Britain, might have been anticipated from the very dissimilar circumstances in which the two countries were placed, at the period of their respective unions. Scotland, it must be remembered, was an independent nation, treating on equal terms, possessing an enlightened and intelligent population, and every way prepared to benefit by the advantages which a friendly connexion with a great and powerful nation would confer upon her. Ireland, on the contrary, had for ages been crushed and trampled on, and at no period of her history was more hopeless and helpless than that immediately preceding her union with England; her Parliament corrupt and slavish—the Orange Ascendancy in the very zenith of its tyranny—the horrors of a half-repealed penal code still before the eyes of the Roman Catholic population: thus circumstanced, the articles of Union, most barbarously unjust towards this country, were drawn up, and quickly passed the House, where coronets, pensions, and sinecures, secured a venal majority. The members of both houses and their retainers, who had hitherto sustained the trade of the metropolis, disappeared; the country became deserted by the gentry, and, at this day, despite every assertion to the contrary, the actual condition of the great mass of the people is even worse than before the junction of the crowns.

How different the case with Scotland. The foundation was well and securely laid, the structure rose in fair proportion and in strength, the advantages were all to be gained by her—and, without any

sacrifice to England but that of an empty name, she was to participate in the rising prosperity and increasing glory of that country. From that moment her resources were magnified, and the sphere of their application extended. In the short space of five years, the increase of commercial intercourse raised the shipping from 10,000 to 50,000 tons; nor can any fact more strikingly illustrate her rapid improvement than this amazing augmentation in so short a period.

The Legislative Union did not prove beneficial to this country, because she was not prepared to receive those benefits, which otherwise she undoubtedly would have enjoyed. The measure, in conception and execution, was the whim of a minister, uncalled for by the expressed desire either of the English or Irish nation. The question of a repeal of this measure has been a good deal agitated; the practicability of which is as questionable as the ulterior benefit which would occur from it. Most undoubtedly, the advocates of repeal have a great deal to struggle with, and are taking the most ciruitous route for the regeneration of their country. They know that this never can be a truly independent nation, yet they seem to exult in the prospect of again enjoying a dependent and subordinate legislative assembly; let them leave off this idle chase after the name, the empty sound of independence, and, in future, direct the irresistible energy of popular opinion in grasping the substance. So shall England atone for the mis-government of ages, by the rapid and unrestricted extension to us, of the substantial freedom she enjoys; so, in the words of our distinguished com-patriot, Shiel, "this country will become the rival of Scotland, in her prosperous industry, and in her high intelligence, as she was once assimilated to her in her discords and feuds."

There is but one point remaining, which I intend to bring forward in this contrast, as illustrative of the pre-eminence of our Scottish fellow-subjects, and I urge it as well for our imitation as our praise; I allude to the amazing elevation to which that country has attained, as a mart for intellectual produce. While from our own press scarce a pamphlet issues, or at best, some production little read at home, and never seen abroad, the enterprizing publishers, not only of the metropolis, but of every populous town in Scotland, vie with each other, in pouring forth, every day, the all-varied and

inexhaustible treasures of knowledge, in a thousand shapes. Whatever of enterprise, originality, or elegance, in the literary world, is attempted elsewhere, speedily is rivalled, nay, often outdone by Scottish energy. There is no country in the world, extent and population considered, so thoroughly imbued with a literary spirit; yet they stop not even here—criticism sits enthroned among them, lording it triumphantly over the realms of fancy and of taste, awarding the palm to transcendent merit, and striking down ambitious dullness into merited oblivion.

Soon may it be our happy lot to behold like causes operating on our own shadowed land, producing similar effects; may we hope to find our fellow-countrymen, no longer driven to minister to the glory and wealth of other shores, putting forth from their own the produce of native talent, and in return receiving glory and reward: may we yet see the life which animates the Society I have the honour to address, extended over the Island, mind struggling with mind, talent encountering talent, in generous rivalry, in intellectual emulation—the most noble of all contests, wherein defeat is not dishonour, and mankind derives benefit from the successful and unsuccessful, from the victor and the vanquished.

Long before we can, as a nation, hope for notice, even in the literary horizon, a great deal must be done; long ere native genius can reach fame and fortune at home, we must dispel, by universal education, the mists that hitherto have darkened and obscured us; we must drive away the ignorance, which so long has brooded over the land, causing many a radiant spirit to lie like a diamond in the dust, valueless and unknown, for want of the in-pouring of the light, which would have been reflected back from it, increased ten thousand fold in brilliancy and lustre. The good work, so long delayed, is now begun; let it be urged on with energy and perseverance. We have, at length, the satisfaction of knowing that the government, wedded to no system, discountenancing every party, knowing no man by his creed, nor seeking to change the creed of any, has taken up the education of the people, without ulterior views or lurking prejudices, in a spirit worthy of the times in which we live—and worthy, too, the enmity of that virulent faction, which

justly dreads, in the progress of enlightenment and the establishment of good feeling, among all denominations, its own decay and dissolution. It is needless to revert to the systems under which the people of Ireland were hitherto supposed, by those who knew no better, to receive their instruction; to remind you of the enormous sums lavished, by successive governments, acting, as I have before shown, through a party, to whom the instruction of the people was death, and who took good care, that the hundreds of thousands should remain as ignorant as ever. The profligate expenditure and disgraceful inefficiency of the Charter Schools, the utter neglect of those on the diocesan foundation,* the partial feeling and proselytizing disposition, which either openly or secretly pervaded all, have been too often, too forcibly exposed, both in and out of parliament, to need further illustration. We are bound in gratitude to the government, which has withdrawn its support from the few, to extend it to the many. Every man who has a wish for the welfare of his country, [and who is worthy the name of man, who has not ?] should hail with delight, this wise and politic measure not alone, because it will, in time, put into the hands of the people, the power of improving their own moral and physical condition; not alone for the good it has already effected, or still more, that which it will effect, but as marking the commencement of a brighter and happier era—when the right hand of fellowship was, in good faith and earnest, extended to the whole Irish people—when the wishes and happiness of the majority began to weigh in the councils, and guide the deliberations of England—when a good omen was afforded us of better days for our country, in the cessation of partial and ungracious

* It was proved in evidence before Parliament, that a Diocesan School, the master of which is a beneficed clergyman, who received, in his capacity of teacher, £100 per annum, had, for several years, three or four scholars only, poor relations of the worthy preceptor, who, very wisely considering that charity begins at home, kept the school for their sole accommodation. A pretty system this! at a time when Joseph Lancaster educated 1000 poor children for £300 per annum, and was abused and maligned for his pains.

enactments, and the adoption of measures, founded on common sense and unbending justice, which alone can claim our gratitude, because such only can ever command our respect.

It is much to be regretted that the friends of Ireland, for we are all friends, though we take different routes for the accomplishment of our journey, are disunited, and at variance with respect to what remains to do for this country. Time and the progress of events, say some, will do much; but we have been too long oppressed, too long prostrate, to wait patiently till justice, doled out to us piecemeal, for six centuries to come, shall balance the unholy persecution of six centuries gone past, if the fair promise which has been held out to us be not "made only to the ear, but broken to the hope." If our rulers find at last that they have trodden in the wrong path, let them hasten, for their own sakes and ours, to erase the foot-prints of tyranny, and to shut out, by speedy retribution, all memory of our iron sway among us.

The re-establishment, for internal and domestic purposes, of a legislative body, others tell us, will be the best security for our rapid improvement. There is, indeed, no doubt that, by the Union, the immediate and local interests of this country, which had been neglected at home, met the same fate abroad. There is no one so foolhardy as to deny, that the trade of our metropolis was utterly ruined by that measure; yet, on the other hand, all the advantages which we could derive from a repeal, supposing such a thing probable, would be more speedily and effectually attained, as far as attention to local interests is concerned, by vesting the power of levying and applying the public money of each county in a body, elected by the cess-payers, and responsible to them—thus taking the arbitrary power, which has been so flagrantly abused by Grand Jurors, from them altogether, and confining them, as in England, to the performance of their judicial functions. The next argument used by the advocates of repeal is, that the greatest benefit we could receive would be the permanent residence of our peers and commoners. I am of opinion, that a modified system of poor laws, which, so far from being felt as an oppressive tax, by affording relief to the people in the shape of employment, must operate decidedly as a source of profit to the state, would, in time, from the tranquillity and increased

comfort which would follow its adoption, tend most materially to induce, as far as the relation of this country to England will permit, the return of many to their estates, who are now deterred from approaching them. If, however, we are disappointed in this, the certain results which would flow from the introduction of a measure of this kind, would, in a great degree, counterbalance the evil, and enable us, if we could not recover the absentees, at least to feel the loss with less poignancy. The gradual amelioration of the agricultural and working classes—the consequent increased demand for manufactures—the cessation of competition for land, and destruction of the pasture system—the reduction, to at least one half, of the amount at present levied for the support of the establishment, and application of the surplus to the formation and support of schools for industry, and other useful establishments, will soon raise up in the country, what is so much wanted, a substantial middle class of manufacturers and tillage farmers, which last, by working the ground to the uttermost, and introducing every agricultural improvement, will give permanent employment to the poor, and, in a few years, make Ireland to England, what Sicily was to Rome, an inexhaustible granary, and place us in the condition of the Scotch, with whom the presence or absence of the aristocratic land owner is a matter of absolute indifference.

I ask those who advocate repeal, whether they would be content with any legislative body which would not enjoy free action, and have complete independence secured to it? Most assuredly, they would not. Having, then, an independent legislature, we should be virtually separated from England—and actually, the very first time a difference of opinion should arise. Thus, at one glance, may be seen, the arguments and prejudices with which this question has to struggle. We have to consider not only the best means whereby our objects may be attained, but the most speedy method of their accomplishment; and when I consider that the voice of England, which hitherto has supported and borne us along, is, on this question, either adverse or indifferent, as is also much of the intelligence, wealth, and talent of the liberal party, in this country, I cannot avoid anticipating, in the further agitation of the question, the postponement of the consummation of our dearest wishes to a tedious and harrassing struggle;

and so far from witnessing the dawning of prosperity, only bequeath to our children and grand-children, the perpetuation of stormy disquiet, and perhaps the recurrence of those unhappy times of resistance and coercion, which have now past away, let us hope for ever.

I look forward with hope and confidence to a Parliament, emanating directly from the people, for giving effect to the expressed wish of the people—to identify completely the interests of the two countries —to extend to us the generous and complete participation in the rights, as we share the dangers of Englishmen—to the utter annihilation of the spirit of party or ascendancy among us—to extinguish national jealousies—to obviate all wish and necessity for a repeal, by making the Union, what, in the words of the biographer of the immortal Charlemont, the Union ought to be, "not of legislatures merely, which can only be found in the statute book, but of hearts, of men, of Britons, of Irishmen, under whatever denomination, civil or religious, they may now be distinguished."

A word, Gentlemen, for your immediate ear, and I have done. Having spoken thus much respecting a few of the many plague-spots of this lovely and neglected land, some apology may be required for the introduction of topics purely political; or, at least, remotely connected with a society devoted to literary pursuits. Would that I could have expatiated on our freedom from political turmoil—on the rapid accumulation of literary treasures, purely national, among us—on our increasing importance in the republic of letters, and the extended intelligence and consequent happiness of our whole community. Would that instead of thus humiliatingly contrasting our own with another country, it had been permitted me to realize our warm wishes for the welfare of beloved Ireland—to paint her and hold her up to the admiring eyes of her sons, not as she is, but as God and nature intended her to be. Shall we, I ask you, who inherit the spirit of that school wherein the youthful genius of a Grattan, a Brenan, an Avonmore, a Hood, tried her earliest flights—who boast, young as we are, of a Drennan, a Templeton, a Montgomery, a Sheridan Knowles, names severally endeared to Science, Oratory and Poesy, and jointly to liberty and mankind—shall we for ever wink, while the causes of our own inferiority strike us in

the face, without daring to brush them away? I feel that on behalf of the men I address, I may answer—never.

Much has been, but much more must be done, to give us a fair opportunity of putting forth our strength, and rejoicing in it; and if we must be lowest among the nations, let the dishonour and disgrace be with us alone; let England give us no cause to taunt her, to tell her, "Look—blush—you have made us what we are."

From the addresses of my predecessors, you have not only derived incentives to increased exertion, but models for your imitation; and you have, I do not doubt, participated with me in the mingled sensations of pleasure and pain, when we heard, as we have often heard, within these walls, the voice of Genius calling on us to arise, to emulate those flights, which none, alas! but her own gifted sons may dare. To them be the task to dazzle, to delight, to overwhelm you; be it mine to stimulate, to excite: that done, to point to those who have preceded me in this pleasing duty as men whom you may fail to surpass, but whom you should never cease to emulate. I have fatigued you with the oft repeated story of our sorrows and our wrongs, and have dressed up your own thoughts in my words, to this end only, that I might impress upon you the all-important fact, which may serve as an apology to the observations I have made, while it justifies my opinion of the propriety of using them in this place, *that our existence as a literary people must be secondary to, and supervening upon our pre-existence as a nation, our enjoyment of the liberty which gave our Scottish fellow-subjects tranquillity, and of the tranquillity which has enabled them to reap the rich harvest of their glory.* While we admire the sturdy independence of the Scot, let us have a care, however, lest in our eagerness to grasp liberty, we stumble upon chains, and while we emulate his national pride, let it be when admiration of our countrymen will not be mere bravado. When we have something to give, let us praise our own hospitality—when we are no longer factious and quarrelsome, let us plume ourselves on our bravery; let us talk of Irish talent when well directed, and boast of our country when we have done that which will make our country boast of us. Let every man, in fine, consider himself born only to contribute by his

his talents and time to his country's regeneration, and the day will yet come, the bright and glorious day, when among the nations Irish character will no longer be a caricature, Irish literature a shadow, and Irish history the dismal record of mal-government and rebellion, resistance and coercion.

Gentlemen, go on; never more than now does your country require the aid of men, who, like you, despising the futile chase after an immaculate government—that phantom, which, like other intangible and unsubstantial apparitions, is proximate, and palpable only to the insane and shattered intellect, have hitherto distinguished themselves as the friends of social order, the enemies of every party, and lovers of good will. There are springs, philosophers tell us, which pour forth abundantly their limpid treasures, while the skies are cloudless, and the earth lies parched and sallow, but withhold their needless waters, when the dews of heaven descend, and nature wears gladness on her face. May you, like these, preserve one green spot, on which the wearied eye may love to dwell,—one blessed fountain, where he who thirsteth after knowledge, may drink and be filled; and, if the day *must* come, when the fount shall be dried up, and the waters gone, may it be when our island is an oasis in ocean's desart,—when her sons shall, every one, partake of the shade and refreshment with which, as yet, only a few isolated spots have been blest, and the whole land be filled with the soul-refreshing products of intellectual culture. But I forbear anticipating the time, may it be distant, when silence, with mute finger on her lips, shall reign, and the voice be lifted no more in these walls. Let me borrow the fond and expressive salute of my countrymen, and to the members and the Society utter all that I feel in one word,

"MAY YOU LIVE FOR EVER."

Wilson, Printer, 70, High-street, Belfast.

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